



Project Space

Xpace Cultural Centre
2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M6K 2W5
416 849 2864
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xpace.info

Meg Feheley

mâsikîskâpoy

November 20th – December 19th, 2020

Tobacco has been frozen inside of ice that is connected to a chain that is suspended from the ceiling. Beneath the ice, we see a large square of cedar that has been meticulously placed on the ground. When all of these things are put in conversation with one another, you are presented with *mâsikîskâpoy* by Meg Feheley.

Something very apparent about this piece is the precise way it exists in the space. Yes, of course all pieces that are part of an exhibition tend to require tireless work and razor-sharp precision. However, the precision that I am speaking of is one that cannot simply take place when an artist decides. What I am speaking of is the precision that is revealed when an artwork has been given the space to *exist* in its own right.

More importantly, to honestly exist in its own right, outside of settler-colonial ideas of time, and space.

Upon taking in Meg's work I was instantly struck by the fact that despite knowing that *mâsikîskâpoy* was created in 2019, it felt as though the piece in its totality had existed far before Xspace was created. This piece makes the exhibit space seem like nothing more than a brutalist afterthought. Furthermore, despite being a static image, there is a movement that exists in the piece that illuminates a haunting. Through an astounding thought process and creation, Feheley orates to us what we have worked so hard to forget.

Our society has a deep obsession with polishing and making everything palatable and shiny, especially our history of violence. This obsession leads us to think that, simply because we have manicured something to the point of nothingness, that it loses its energy, essence, and life force. The beginning for *mâsikîskâpoy*, as Meg describes it, was when they were walking in Kensington market and saw a perfect square of cedar poking out from a fence. In seeing this perfectly framed square Feheley describes it as seeing a "Landing spot for the melting of time and a portal"¹. As previously mentioned, when looking at a static image of the piece there is an undeniable movement and vibration about the piece that causes it to glow. From these specific characteristics, I was forced to ask, at what moment in space and in time am I experiencing this piece?

The ice from the chain above the cedar is starting to melt. The water that is now showing itself as it spreads from underneath the piece. The water creates such an intense amount of surface tension, it eventually bursts from the dam of its own making. The water flows where it pleases, as it leans into the shallow valleys and crevices that make up the

¹ Kayla Carter in conversation with Megan Feheley

²exhibit space floor. Feheley engages with and holds space for water in ways that remind us that water exists beyond its availability for our consumption. In using water in all of its distinct forms, but more importantly, by simply allowing water to exist, Feheley gets us to witness the ways in which ice is a holder of memory - and that as the ice melts we are also watching the melting and collapsing of time. In *mâsikîskâpoy*, Feheley puts ice and tobacco in conversation with one other. Tobacco as a form of medicine, but also an offering that holds deep ancestral meaning and knowledge for not only the Cree nation but for many Indigenous people across Turtle Island. Once the ice melts and the tobacco is released, it symbolizes being released from a generational curse. "Release without absolution ... part of a haunting that did not need to be fixed, it was just a haunting that let itself go"².

Most of us have received an education that is grounded in the idea that colonial occupation and impact precludes knowledge and existence. As I spoke with Meg, a sense of haunting was a recurring theme. As we, the viewer, continue to absorb and humble ourselves to Feheley's work, we soon come to realize that what was originally thought of as an exhibition, is a piece of land actively and deliberately reclaiming its rightful place. Every part of *mâsikîskâpoy* exists within its own rhythm and time, with a permanence and at a frequency that makes it impossible to forget or be naïve to what we are witnessing. Every part of this magnificent piece reminds and haunts us through the knowledge that despite intentional attempts to eradicate it, its knowledge and existence cannot be eradicated and continues to exist, in part, via the magnificence of haunting.

² Kayla Carter in conversation with Megan Feheley

Haunting by the abject, the gone and the assumed extinct will always exist, as long as colonization and its keepers continue to think that the violence on and towards this land can be called progress.

Meg Feheley's ability to distinctly suspend and collapse time and space reminds us in the most palpable way, that Canada's history and institutions of violence will not be forgotten despite the incessant neo-liberal performances of reconciliation. Feheley's work is so much more than a commentary on reclaiming space. *mâsikîskâpoy* exists boldly and magnificently across time, space, and function.

-Kayla Carter